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Written statement* submitted by the International Career Support Association, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

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* This written statement is issued, unedited, in the language(s) received from the submitting non-governmental organization(s).

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The people who make Okinawa a political issue

It is my great honor to be here today. I am honor to introduce myself to you all. My name is Toshiaki Okano. I used to be a school teacher and mayor of Choshi-City.

Today, I am here to share some facts with you on people in Okinawa, the southernmost prefecture of Japan. While the term "indigenous people" is not categorically defined by the international treaty such as "International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights" (ICCPR) and "Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples", international society, under the leadership of the U.N. Human Rights Commission, has been successfully identify these people and address issues they face through inclusive consultation and careful diagnosis from various aspects with due consideration with local and historical context. I strongly believe that the success and effectiveness of the work by the U.N. to address the issue of "indigenous people" is, and will be critically dependent on careful diagnostic process driven by objective facts, not by emotional agitation or one-sided allegation. We cannot ignore the rumor anymore, could no longer bear with the situation because it will artificially create division, prejudice and discrimination among that some incorrect gonzo information about the Japanese who are united and living in a harmonized manner. Since Japan consists of more than six thousand and eight hundred (6,800) islands stretching about 3000kmthree thousand kilometers from north to south and east to west, each region has its own uniqueness including language, history, music, dance, handicrafts, foods, and nature. Like other 46 prefectures, Okinawa is the place of shining unique culture. People in Okinawa often call themselves as "uchinan-chu", which means "Okinawa-nese, just like people in Osaka call themselves as "Kansai-jin", meaning "people born and raised in Kansai."

This does not mean that they do not identify themselves as Japanese. As many of you know, Okinawa turned into a fierce battle field in the last stage of the WW2 , followed by the rule under the U.S. Government until (1972). Despite the unfortunate history, the Japanese government has unfairly or discriminately, compared to other 46 prefectures. There has been a politically-charged dispute between the Japanese central government and the Okinawa municipal government on U.S military base. This is a difficult but a common issue when it comes to deciding the location of a public facility which is necessary for all, but troublesome for those who live in the affected area. Examples of such facilities include nuclear power plants, waste treatment facilities, prisons, and military bases. While so called "NIMBY – Not In My Back Yard".

My point here is that any those factors behind the issue of U.S military base in Okinawa have nothing to do with racial, cultural, religious and ethnic identity of people in Okinawa.

While I am not quite sure about the intention behind the rumor claim, this can be seen as a political act aiming at further complicating political debate on the issue around U.S Military Base in Okinawa, splitting Japanese people into two groups, and artificially escalating the tension among Japanese, thereby creating an opportunity to get some geo-political gain. What I mentioned just now sounds more realistic when you think of the growing uncertainty in the national security environment in and around North-East Asian Region.

With this in mind, let me ask colleagues in United Nations for your careful and objective diagnosis on this subject. As we all know, any action by the U.N Human Rights Commission should bridge a gap between people, not dividing people; should eliminate discrimination, not create prejudice; should help people work together, not make people hate each other. To achieve the goal of the United Nations, and not to make any unintentional mistakes, I want all of you here today to examine the issue from various aspects through inclusive and consultative process with due consideration with historical, culture, legal, and emotional context of the concerned area and people. Please keep in mind that the battle ship Yamato went to rescue Okinawa by knowing that they will never able to return. Thank you.

Editor: Toshiaki Okano